

Food & Fitness *July 2000*

Stress Reduction

Relax Your Way to Health

Stress is a part of life. When we talk about stress reduction we mean reducing the effects of stress.

Effects of stress may include:



- ★ Rapid breathing
- ★ Rapid heart rate
- ★ Eating problems
- ★ Anxiety
- ★ Sweaty palms

- ★ Increased blood pressure
- ★ Difficulty concentrating
- ★ Upset stomach
- ★ Sleep problems
- ★ Irritability



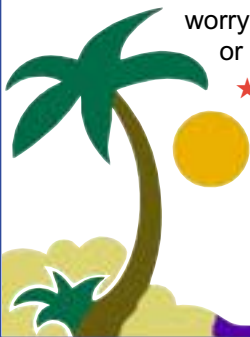
How to Reduce Your Stress Level

- ★ Evaluate your life. Eliminate or change as many stress-producing activities as you can.
- ★ Express your feelings and emotions - by talking, writing, having a good cry or whatever works for you.
- ★ Get more exercise. It's a natural stress-reducer.
- ★ Stretch those muscles made tense by stress.
- ★ Work some of your favorite relaxing techniques - such as a hot soak in the bathtub or a walk through the park - into your daily life.
- ★ Avoid crutches like tobacco, alcohol, sleeping pills and other drugs. They only make stress worse in the long run.
- ★ Choose one or more relaxation techniques and do them every day.

Relaxation Techniques

Of the many relaxation techniques available, here are three. Ask your doctor for additional stress-reduction techniques and materials such as tapes and books.

- ★ **Progressive muscle relaxation:** Stretch out on the floor or on a firm mattress. Starting with the feet, tense each muscle group in the body one by one, holding for a count of 5 and then relaxing for a count of 10. Take five or ten minutes to tense and relax each muscle group in the body, including the muscles of the face and scalp. When you're finished, relax for a few minutes, noticing how the tension has flowed out of your body.
- ★ **Relaxation response:** Sit quietly in a comfortable position with your eyes closed. Allow your breathing to become somewhat slower and deeper and centered in your abdomen. With each breath you exhale, say a word such as "one" - or any word you find relaxing or meaningful. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. Don't worry if thoughts come into your head; just let them float away. Do this once or twice a day.
- ★ **Visualization:** Sitting comfortably, close your eyes and imagine a peaceful scene. This could be a sunny meadow, a cozy fireside or whatever makes you feel calm. Explore this scene in your mind for 5 to 15 minutes before returning to your busy schedule.



Source: Parlay International

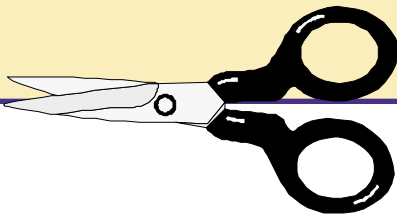
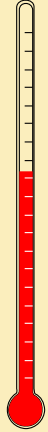
Self-Care Tools and Supplies

Build Your Home Health Kit

A good home healthcare kit has both the supplies and information you need to deal with minor emergencies. In addition to the items below, your home healthcare kit should also include materials to meet any special healthcare needs of the members of your household.

SELF-CARE TOOLS

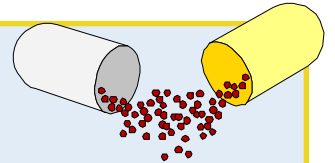
- Cold pack
- Humidifier or vaporizer
- Medicine spoon
- Thermometer
- Dental mirror
- Eyedropper
- Heating pad
- Tweezers
- Bulb syringe
- Nail clippers
- Penlight
- Scissors



MEDICATIONS

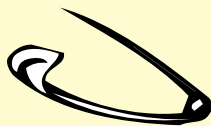
- Antacid for indigestion and heartburn
- Antidiarrheals
- Cold and allergy remedies
- Antibacterial ointment
- Hydrocortisone cream for minor skin irritations, rashes and itching
- Baking soda for rashes and insect bites
- Petroleum jelly
- Rubbing alcohol
- Hydrogen peroxide for cleaning wounds
- Laxatives for occasional constipation
- Pain relievers such as aspirin, acetaminophen and ibuprofen
- Syrup of ipecac to induce vomiting in case of poisoning

Remember: Always check with your doctor before taking any medication for the first time, especially if you have diabetes or high blood pressure.



SELF-CARE SUPPLIES

- Adhesive strips
- Butterfly bandages
- Sterile gauze pads (two inches square)
- Roll of two-inch gauze bandage
- One-inch adhesive tape
- Elastic bandage
- Cotton balls
- Safety pins
- Dental disclosing tablets
- Dental floss



OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Stethoscope and blood pressure cuff - if someone in your family has high blood pressure
- Rectal thermometer - for small children
- Home medical tests for chronic conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure
- Bee sting kit
- Your prescription drugs

Source: Parlay International